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Tosini, Michele

MICHELE DI RIDOLFO
DEL GHIRLANDAIO

(1503 - 1577)

HOLY FAMILY

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THE TREASURES OF ITALIAN PAINTING IN U. S. A.

MICHELE DI RIDOLFO DEL GHIRLANDAIO

Was born in 1503 and died in 1577; he was a pupil of Lorenzo Di Credi. His collaboration with Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio began about 1525, according to Vasari's testimony.

These paintings, as a rule, display vigorous modelling, freshness of color and a play of artificial light, but at the same time are treated with greater freedom and breadth than Ridolfo shows in his later works painted alone (Virgin and Saints - Istituto della Quiete - Florence).

The painting ordered by Bishop Buonafede for the church of S. Jacopo alle Murate, now in the Academy at Florence, shows all the progress that Michele had made in technique, with the monumentality imposed about 1525 by Andrea Del Sarto's last manner, but softened by the fusion of Poligo; this technique now dominated even Ridolfo, who was himself an intelligent and imaginative artist well worthy to rank with the other masters of his age, whom he often surpassed. (Madonna and Saints-Academy Gallery, Florence).

A characteristic painting by Michele di Ridolfo Del Ghirlandaio is to be seen in the elegant, well-balanced Michelangelesque composition (The Holy Family) which is in the Bandini museum at Fiesole.

A variant of this Holy Family, which has been justly recognized as a masterpiece from the hand of Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, painted in the last, most mature stage of his artistic development, is in a private collection in the United States; it was formerly in the possession of the noble Florentine family Morrocchi-Di Giulio.

If we compare the style of the types and of their interpretation, and observe the posture, the modelling of the figures, the hands, the face of the Madonna, of the exquisitely light and vaporous draperies, the way the light is cast on the flesh and clothing, the limpid transparency of touch and many other particulars, we are forced to the conclusion that this painting cannot be disunited from two other Holy Families in existence, one in the afore-mentioned Bandini Museum at Fiesole, the other in the Pitti Palace at Florence, and both ascribed to Michele di Ridolfo Del Ghirlandaio; which corroborates the rightful ascription to this Master of the tenderer, more purely pictorial rendering of the same subject in the United States. This painting is fully illustrated in this brochure.

Michele collaborated with Vasari in the decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio, indulging in an artificially Michelangelesque style after the manner of Salviati and in a chromatic interpretation borrowed from Parmigianino in the painting of the "Martyrdom of the Theban Legion", which is now in the Academy of Fine Arts at Florence.

There are allegorical figures (Night and Dawn, Leda and Lucretia) by Michele in the Colonna and Borghese galleries at Rome and in the Palazzo Pitti at Florence.

On his return to Rome in 1570, Michele painted the graceful frescoes for the Tabernacle of the High Altar in the church of the Madonna della Querce at Viterbo.

Among his works we must remember the beautiful paintings of the Nativity and the Archangels in the Badia of Passignano - so nobly planned and so firmly constructed.

The frescoes painted by Michele over the city gates in the Al Prato, S. Gallo, and La Croce gate-towers remind us, in their grandiosity, of Andrea Del Sarto's Madonna of the Corn Sack.

Michele was no less a master-painter in portraiture, as may be seen in his portrait of a huntsman, which we may admire in Marchese Antinori's collection at Cigliano near Florence, and in the Portrait of a Lady, which is conceived on a grand scale and boldly carried out, the handling being very similar to that of Parmigianino.

Michele di Ridolfo Del Ghirlandaio's last manner, with its softer coloring, less dense chiaroscuro and closer grouping is to be seen in his St. Barbara in the Royal Galleries at Florence.

Recent studies have given a clearer, more definite outline to the figure of this artist who showed himself worthy to be considered a master-painter and to rank with the other masters of his age.

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SOME WORKS OF MICHELE DI RIDOLFO DEL GHIRLANDAIO

Madonna of the Girdle - S. Marco museum - Florence
 Madonna and Saints - Academy gallery - Florence
 Martyrdom of the Theban Legion - Academy gallery - Florence
 Female Figure - Royal Galleries - Florence
 St Barbara - Royal Galleries - Florence
 Night - Colonna gallery - Rome
 Dawn - Colonna gallery - Rome
 Leda - Borghese gallery - Rome
 Holy Family - Pitti Palace - Florence
 Female Figure - Pitti Palace - Florence
 Marriage of St Catherine - Antique and Modern Art Gallery - Florence
 Holy Family - Bandini Museum - Fiesole (Florence)
 Holy Family - Private collection of Charles V. Schlairet - Mount Vernon (Ohio)
 Nativity - Badia - Passignano
 Three Archangels - Badia - Passignano
 Portrait of Huntsman - Antinori collection - Cigliano (Florence)
 Madonna of the Oak Tree - Tabernacle - Church at Viterbo
 Madonna and Saints - Istituto della Quiete - Florence

PERIZIE

Il Prof. Odoardo H. Giglioli, già direttore delle Regie Gallerie di Firenze, scrive :

« Opera pregevole ed interessante di Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (M. Tosini) nato a Firenze nel 1503 e morto ivi nel 1577. Aiutò Ridolfo e fu scolaro di Lorenzo di Credi. Questa « Sacra Famiglia » fu interpretata più volte dal nostro artista, ma tra gli esemplari più noti quali le pitture del Museo Bandini a Fiesole e l'altra alla Galleria Pitti, questo quadro mi sembra il migliore anche per il colorito più succoso e caldo. Se si confronta col dipinto di Fiesole si constata che le differenze di particolari, anche se l'insieme compositivo è eguale, hanno portata l'opera d'arte ad un livello superiore ».

f.to ODOARDO H. GIGLIOLI
(già Direttore delle Reali Gallerie di Firenze)

Il Prof. G. Fiocco, il famoso scrittore e critico d'arte, ordinario di storia dell'arte medioevale e moderna all'Università di Padova scrive :

« Questa tavola è l'esemplare più bello di una composizione nota di Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio.

Supera cioè tanto quella del Museo Bandini a Fiesole, quanto l'altra di Pitti che il Voss riproduce.

L'artista ha nelle carni tornite del bellissimo Bimbo dormente e nel volto della Vergine alcunchè di pontormesco, ma il colore si intenerisce in gamme iridescenti, particolari al Maestro e proprie della branca toscana migliore del '500 (cinquecento) del Rosso, intendo e del Becafumi.

Michele di Ridolfo è pittore rappresentatissimo nelle Gallerie Italiane e straniere ».

f.to G. FIOCCO

Padova - Prato della Valle, 11

Soprintendenza alle Gallerie per le Provincie di Firenze, Arezzo e Pistoia

Il Soprintendente scrive

« Ho esaminato le fotografie del dipinto « La Sacra Famiglia ». Mi sembra sicura l'attribuzione a Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio di cui la figura è stata da recenti studi ben definita e chiarita, e convengo pienamente nell'attribuzione data dagli amici Giglioli e Fiocco ».

f.to GIOVANNI POGGI

La ben nota scrittrice e critico d'arte inglese Evelyn Sandberg Valalà ha espresso la seguente opinione :

« Sacra famiglia - composizione a mezze figure, che risale, nella mia opinione, a Michele di Ridolfo Ghirlandaio (maestro fiorentino vissuto dal 1503 sino al 1577, allievo e poi collaboratore di Ridolfo sino dal 1525; sviluppò il suo stile personalissimo sotto le influenze di Andrea Del Sarto e di Michelangiolo).

Una variante della stessa composizione, che rappresenta, non senza spunto raffaellesco, il sonno del Bambino Gesù, esiste tuttora nel Museo Bandini.

In questo quadro abbiamo un esemplare geniale del momento quando il tardo Rinascimento stà sciogliendosi nel Manierismo. La composizione ritiene l'equilibrio majestale del primo, ma i colori, le

luci, il movimento a forti diagonali che rompono lo schema formale, sanno già del nuovo spirito. Michele, più di Ridolfo, è al corrente e fa parte della nuova Arte. Il suo fare è leggero, pastoso, sfumato, brioso; il suo colore brillante e vivace, il suo sentimento tenero, umano, delicato.

Il quadro è uno dei più belli di lui e certamente autentico, e ben conservato ».

f.to EVELYN SANDBERG VAVALA

Il famoso scrittore e critico d'arte americano Mason Perkins, in una comunicazione personale scrive :

« Il quadro della Madonna col Bambino nudo che dorme, accompagnata da S. Giuseppe e S. Giovannino, ha tutti i caratteri di un'opera di Michele Tosini, detto Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio.

Esso appartiene a quel gruppo di pitture, prodotti dell'ultima e più matura fase dell'evoluzione stilistica di Michele, che, in seguito ad un curioso malinteso, sono stati, per molti anni, erroneamente attribuiti ad un certo Francesco Brina.

Il dipinto ci mostra il suo autore quando la sua arte aveva acquistato una grandiosità formale prettamente cinquecentesca per non dire Michelangiolesca. Nella sua esecuzione, nella modellatura delle sue forme e nel trattamento dei suoi drappi, il quadro esibisce una tecnica meno dura, più soave e più puramente pittorica, di quella della maggioranza dei dipinti di questo periodo inoltrato dell'attività del suo autore.

Si tratta, del resto, di un esemplare non meno interessante che bello dell'opera del pittore il quale, nell'ultima sua maniera, si è mostrato degno di essere contato tra i più notevoli stilisti della tarda scuola Fiorentina ».

f.to MASON PERKINS

EXPERT OPINIONS

Prof. Odoardo H. Giglioli, former curator of the Royal Galleries, Florence, writes :

« A valuable and interesting work by Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (M. Tosini) who was born at Florence in 1503 and died there in 1577. He helped Ridolfo and was a pupil of Lorenzo di Credi. This « Holy Family » was interpreted by this artist several times, but among the best known examples of this subject, such as the picture in the Bandini museum at Fiesole and the other in the Pitti Gallery, I consider that this picture with its warm mellow colouring is the finest. If we compare it with the painting at Fiesole, we find that although the general composition is the same, yet the differences in the detail bring this work of art on to a higher plane ».

signed ODOARDO H. GIGLIOLI

Prof. G. Fiocco, the famous art critic and writer, professor of medioeval and modern art history at Padua University writes :

« This painting is the finest example of a well known composition by Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio. That is to say, it is superior both to his rendering of the same subject in the Bandini museum at Fiesole and to that in the Pitti Palace, which is reproduced by Voss.

There is a hint of Pontormo in the face of the Virgin and the rounded limbs of the beautiful sleeping Child, but the delicate iridescence of the colouring is characteristic of the Master and belongs to the best Tuscan group of the XVI th century, I refer of course to Del Rosso and Beccafumi.

Michele di Ridolfo is well represented both in Italian and foreign museums ».

signed G. FIOCCO

Superintendence of State Galleries in the provinces of Florence, Arezzo and Pistoia. The superintendent Prof. Giovanni Poggi writes :

« I have examined the photographs of the painting « The Holy Family ». My opinion is that it may safely be ascribed to Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, whose figure has been well defined and brought out by recent studies, and I am in complete agreement with my friends Giglioli and Fiocco in ascribing it to him ».

signed G. POGGI

The well known English writer and art critic Evelyn Sandberg Valalà has given her opinion as follows :

« Holy Family - A composition with half-length figures, which in my opinion, dates back to Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (a Florentine master who flourished from 1503 to 1577; he was first a pupil of Ridolfo and then collaborated with him until 1525; he developed an extremely personal style influenced by Andrea Del Sarto and Michelangelo).

A variant of the same composition, which shows the holy Child asleep and is somewhat reminiscent of Raphael, is still in existence in the Bandini Museum.

In this picture we have an excellent example of the moment in which the late Renaissance was passing into mannerism. The composition still keeps the majestic balance of the former, but the colouring, the lights and the strong diagonal movement breaking up the formal scheme, all give evidence of the new spirit. His touch is light, plastic, gay, fused; his colouring clean and brilliant, his mood tender, delicate and human.

This picture is one of his finest canvases and is undoubtedly authentic; it is in a very good state of preservation. »

signed EVELYN SANDBERG VAVALÀ

The famous American art critic and writer Mason Perkins gives the following opinion in a private letter :

« The picture of the Madonna with the nude sleeping Child accompanied by St Joseph and St John the Baptist, possesses all the characteristics of a work by Michele Tosini, also called Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio. It belongs to the group of paintings produced during Michele's last phase of evolution, when his style reached its maturity, and which, through a curious misunderstanding, were for many years ascribed to a Francesco Brina.

The painting shows us its author when his art had acquired a formal grandiosity that is pure sixteenth century, not to say Michelangelesque. The picture in its modelling, and in the treatment of the draperies, shows less rigid technique, a softer, more purely pictorial handling than we find in the majority of this painter's works belonging to this last period.

This is a fine and most interesting example of the work of an artist who, in his last manner, shewed himself worthy of a place among the foremost stylists of the late Florentine school ».

signed MASON PERKINS

AN ORIGINAL XVTH CENTURY PAINTING WHICH WOULD BE A RARE
TREASURE IN ANY MUSEUM IN THE WORLD



HOLY FAMILY

MICHELE DI RODOLFO DEL GHIRLANDAIO (1503 - 1577)

This fine group is a characteristic work of Michele di Rodolfo del Ghirlandaio.

Noble Michelangesque composition, painted in his maturity and in a remarkably good state of preservation; it is an exceptionally fine example of this admirable painter, exquisite in every detail, reverent in feeling and technically perfect, of great beauty and infinite charm. Ghirlandaio's color, always original, glows here with a subdued fire. (On wood 30½ x 40 inches).



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Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (1503

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